

Otherwise Known as Tib

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Summary: For a while, Nero has felt that HIVE needs a new extracurricular activity. (Nothing wrong with water polo, of course, and the students love it, but still...) Ignoring the suggestions of his faculty and staff, he decides to start an orchestra. Wing and Laura are staying out, Otto is reading up on the violin, Shelby and Franz are grudgingly auditioning, and Maestro Nigel? He's ready.

1. (Orchestra)

"And I have a new proposal for your consideration." Various members of the faculty quietly stifled yawns. The meeting had been going on for an hour? two hours? three hours? It had been so mind-numbingly boring that it was hard to tell. Colonel Francisco tried to remember what had been said thirty seconds before and failed. Please, Nero!

"For a while, I have felt that, considering the atmosphere of our school and our goals and expectations, especially in this time of growing competition from the world's security forces, it might be prudent to—" Raven coughed gently. "Well, anyway, I wanted to raise the idea of a new extracurricular activity. Of course, the students certainly enjoy water polo, but, well, I thought we ought to consider something more academic."

Francisco grunted. "What's wrong with water polo?"

"Nothing, of course," said Nero smoothly. "It's just not as intellectually stimulating as, I feel, some of our students—"

"What do you want, then?" Francisco demanded. "Kickboxing? Grappler races? Car races? Helicopter races? Ski races? Snowmobile races?" He seemed to be warming to his theme.

"Well, isn't that just like you?" snorted Mrs. Leon. "That's already what you're doing in class. You're just trying to have more time for yourself, and you already have so much—two hours a week more than I

haveâ€| " She shot a black look at Nero.

"Ahem," said Raven.

"So you want something sissy?" asked Francisco. "Something likeâ€| something likeâ€| " His imagination failed him.

"Chess!" said Professor Pike happily.

"Chess?" Francisco asked, horrified.

"A worthy idea," said Nero, "but chess does not really require a group in the same way that something like, say, water polo would."

"Chess?" asked Francisco. "The next thing you'll suggest will beâ€| will beâ€| orchestra or something!"

"Orchestra?" asked Nero. "A fine idea. I heartily approve. HIVEmind will announce auditions tomorrow." Francisco sank down in his chair, clutching his forehead and moaning softly. "Thank you for your excellent suggestion, Colonel."

2. Orchestra?

"That's interesting," said Otto the next morning. He, Laura, Wing, and Shelby were walking to breakfast when they spotted a sign hung up in Accommodation Block 7.

"String orchestra?" asked Shelby. "What's wrong with water polo?"

"Have you, by any chance, gotten the impression that Nero wasâ€| umâ€| less than thrilled with water polo?" asked Otto sarcastically.

"His face in the last game!" laughed Laura. "I didn't know that a mouth could get soâ€| straight."

"He did seem pained," agreed Wing gravely.

"Are you going to try out?" asked Otto. Wing laughed.

"When I was very young, Lao told me that I had absolutely no musical talent," said Wing. "I am inclined to believe him?"

"How did he know?" asked Shelby.

"I believe he overheard me humming to myself," said Wing, straight faced.

"Ah," said Otto. "What about you guys?" Laura shrugged.

"I never played an instrument," she said. "I guess I liked the singing we sometimes did at school, but I was more interested in computersâ€| What about you, Shelby?"

"I played violin," said Shelby. "I was pretty good, too, but then when myâ€| umâ€| career started, I don't know. What do you guys

think. Should I try out?"

"You may as well," said Otto.

"What are you doing, Otto?" asked Laura.

"Well, I've never actually, you know, played an instrument, but I know the theory. It might be interesting to try."

"And of course, you don't need the study time," said Laura.

"Well, yes, there is thatâ€¦" he admitted.

3. Orchestra!

"Did you see the sign?" asked Nigel at breakfast. Franz grunted, being engaged in trying to stuff three croissants into his mouth. Nigel waited patiently until he finished chewing.

"Sign?" Franz asked. "This is being the sign about the cafeteria opening earlier for breakfast, ja?"

"I don't recall any sign like that," said Nigel dubiously. "I mean the sign about an orchestra starting at HIVE."

"Mmm?" said Franz, who had just snagged a few more pastries off the tray of some hapless Pol/Fi and was attacking them with the appetite of one who had not eaten in years. At closer inspection, they seemed to contain puff pastry and cheese. The Pol/Fi was cussing Franz out in his native language, which, luckily, Franz was unable to understand.

"I'm definitely going to do it," announced Nigel.

"Mmm?"

"I played the violin before I came to HIVE, and I really loved it."

"Mmm?"

"I can't remember when the auditions areâ€¦"

"Mmm?"

"â€¦but I hope that they're soon."

"Mmm?"

"Do you play an instrument?" Understanding his friend's great interest in this new topic of conversation, Franz finished his cheesy comestibles with astonishing speed.

"Mmmf, blargh, grrgh." He coughed. "I was playing theâ€¦ kontrabass, ja?"

"Oh," said Nigel, somewhat surprised. "Ahâ€¦ why?"

"Well, it is happening this way," said Franz in the air of one

settling down to tell a long story about the good old days in one's distant homeland. Nigel, who hadn't particularly liked his past life and didn't particularly have a homeland ("Villainy is global, son," he remembered Diabolus saying), automatically stopped listening. "My father is always saying, 'Franz, you must be cultured. It is not just being about chocolate.' So he is giving me the choice between music and Russian literature, ja? Well, I am certainly choosing music. So, on my tenth birthday, my father is making me a whole orchestra out of chocolate. And he is giving me whichever instrument I eat, so I am not choosing piccolo, ja? I remember that kontrabassâ€¦ The body was being made of Ghanian 47% chocolate delicately flavored withâ€¦"

"Hiya!" said Shelby, plonking herself down beside Nigel. "So, what do you guys think about our new extracurricular activity?"

"I am worrying about the hours," said Franz seriously. "I am thinking they might be interfering with our meals, ja?"

"Don't be ridiculous," snapped Nigel, uncharacteristically. "Orchestra is from 4-5. The dining hall opens at 6:30."

"You have a good memory," said Shelby, yawning. "I wonder where the rest of our motley crew is. Oh, they're still in line. Right. I forgot. It's so much easier knowing what you're going to eat every day." Nigel raised an eyebrow.

"I hate to sound like Wing, but Fruit Loops? Really?"

"It brings back my childhood," said Shelby. "It's a comfort food thing. Like Franz and his chocolate."

"That I am not believing," said Nigel. "You have no idea how seriously Franz takes his chocolate."

"Actually, she does," said Laura coming up from behind them. "Shel. remember when he tried to break into Francisco's locker after he heard a rumor that there was chocolate in there?"

"About time that you've come," muttered Shelby. "I think even Franz is finishing up. It would be so much easier if you knew what you were going to get ahead of time."

"I do," insisted Laura, "but I wait in line like a civilized person. I don't just barge through to the cereal boxes like someone I knowâ€¦"

"Children, children," said Otto complacently, waving his hand vaguely through the air. "Enough bickering."

"What's wrong with him?" complained Shelby.

"I do not believe that Otto got any sleep last night," said Wing. "It is affecting him rather strangely."

"So even supercomputers need their sleep?" teased Shelby. "What were you doing last night, Otto?"

"Lying awake in bed listening to Wing's snores." Otto grinned. "What else?" Wing looked around guiltily.

"Sorry." Nigel was getting a little bored of the conversation. Such frivolous talk was alright on ordinary occasions, but when there was such a burning subject to be discussed.

"Did you see the announcement this morning?" he asked casually. Everyone stared at him.

"You too, Nigel?" asked Shelby.

"What? Oh, never mind. Anyway, are you guys going to do it?"

"I guess," said Shelby. "I mean, why not?"

"It's not like you study anyway," said Laura.

"Hey," muttered Shelby darkly. "That wasn't nice, book-face."

"Are you calling me a book-face?" asked Laura.

"Why yes, I was," replied Shelby. Nigel wondered whether it was possible to have a sane conversation, an exchange of information uninterrupted by this sort of un-witty repartee.

"What about you, Wing?" he asked.

"No."

"Laura?"

"No." He wasn't quite sure if this was addressed to him or to Shelby, who was currently engaged in kicking Laura under the table. Every once in a while, Laura misplaced her foot and hit Nigel instead.

"Take that, youâ€"

"Ow!" complained Nigel. "What about you, Otto?"

"Huh?" Why was it so impossible to keep a simple conversation going?

"Are you auditioning for orchestra?"

"Oh, yes."

"Which instrument?" Otto shrugged. "Do you play two instruments?"

"Actually," said Otto, "I have never played any instrument at all. However, I plan to read all that the library has to offer on string instruments, and I'm pretty confident I'll be able to succeed on my first try." Nigel goggled at him.

"I don't think you will, Otto," he said. "Knowing the theory is all very well, but there's a lot of muscle memory involvedâ€| shifting and everything."

"I'm sure it will work out," said Otto. Nigel shrugged. Then, as if making a decision, he pushed his plate of unfinished food in the

direction of Franz and got up to go.

"Where are you going?" asked Shelby. "There's still twenty minutes before class starts."

"Oh, you knowâ€|" mumbled Nigel. "Practice and stuffâ€|"

"Practicingâ€| the violin?" asked Otto. Franz grunted as he ingested Nigel's plate of food.

"Ja, ja. He is being very serious about the violin."

"I should probably practice at some point tooâ€|" mumbled Shelby. Then she brightened up. "But there's water polo tonight, so I can't."

"Grrmf," said Franz, struggling to clear his mouth sufficiently to talk. "And since everyone will be at the game, I am thinking that there will be no line for the dining hall, ja?"

End
file.